

“I DIE THE KING’S GOOD SERVANT, AND GOD’S FIRST.”

(TRANSLATION OF THE PARIS NEWSLETTER ACCOUNT, AUGUST 4, 1535: “QU’IL MOUROIT SON BON SERVITEUR *ET* DE DIEU PREMIEREMENT.”)

More describes an important conversation about conscience which he had with King Henry and to which he alludes in his last, brief statement, “I die the king’s good servant and God’s first”:

"I had always, from the beginning [of my service to Henry VIII, in 1518], truly conducted myself by looking first upon God and next upon the King according to the lesson that his Highness taught me at my first coming to his noble service, the most virtuous lesson that ever prince taught his servant" (from the [“Letter to Margaret,”](#) June 3, 1535)

". . . His Highness. . . made me [in 1529], as you well know, his Chancellor of this realm. Soon after, his Grace asked me yet again to look and consider his great matter, and well and indifferently to ponder such things as I should find. . . . And nevertheless he graciously declared unto me that he would in no wise that I should do or say anything except that I should perceive my own conscience should serve me, and that I should first look unto God and after God unto him, which most gracious words was the first lesson also that ever his Grace gave me at his first coming into his noble service." (from the “Letter to Cromwell, March 5, 1534,” *Selected Letters*, 209)

For another version of both conversations, see More’s “Letter to Wilson” (1534):

". . . . For other commandment had I never of his Grace in good faith, saving that this knot his Highness added thereto that I should therein look first unto God and after God unto him, which word was also the first that his Grace gave me what time I came first into his noble service and neither a more indifferent commandment nor a more gracious lesson could there in my mind never King give counselor or any other servant." (*Selected Letters*, 229)